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December 2, 2021

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and our 1.4 million members, I urge you to complete work on all 12 fiscal year (FY) 2022 funding bills as soon as possible. It's also imperative that action be taken before the current short-term continuing resolution (CR) expires to avoid any possible threat of shutdown. Under no circumstances should Congress default to a year-long CR that would damage our ability to respond to multiple public health and the economic crises we now face.

Working in hundreds of different occupations, AFSCME members and the communities they serve rely on this funding to administer COVID tests and vaccines; ensure that students have access to nutritious meals; ensure that school buildings are clean and safe; provide child care so that parents can work; help unemployed workers access needed benefits and services and find new employment; maintain libraries as community resources; and much more. Our country's needs are vastly different than they were a year ago as students, workers, retirees, and families struggle to catch up from the hardships of the pandemic. Robust investments are urgently needed to maintain the public services necessary to recover from the current pandemic, create new jobs and grow the economy.

While COVID relief aid, the recent infrastructure package and the Build Back Better package, once enacted, will address critical issues, they do not supplant the need for reliable, annual funding nor will they sustain and improve many existing, worthy programs. The following examples are just a few of the many programs that have suffered from recent budget austerity and require new investments to deal with substantial and growing unmet needs.

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services-** Last year, the nation's overdose rate increased by a staggering 30 percent. In FY 2022 bills, states are slated to receive billions of dollars to assist with prevention, treatment, and recovery services.
- **Public Health-** CRs make it difficult for state and local health departments, as well as school districts, to plan activities and hire staff as they rely on predictable funding from federal agencies to carry out their work. Funding delays will hold up essential programmatic work in communities across the country.
- **Public Education-** After a decade of almost frozen funding for education, the House and Senate LHHS bills would provide needed investments to address long-standing needs. Freezing funding at last year's levels would leave funding for the Department of Education below the level of a decade ago in inflation-adjusted dollars.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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- **Child Care-** During the pandemic, the costs of child care at a center rose an estimated 47 percent, while family day care increased by 70 percent, and many child care centers were forced to close. Lack of child care is keeping many women from rejoining the labor force. Flat-funding child care would make it impossible to rebuild capacity. This program is an essential partner to the entitlement pending in BBB.
- **Unemployment Assistance-** More than 11.8 million people are unemployed or underemployed and women, people of color and people without an education past high school comprise a disproportionate amount of these workers. A CR would deny additional investments to an already historically underfunded, outdated workforce system at a time of great need.

I urge you to prioritize the needs of our country's students, workers, retirees and families by working to complete an omnibus FY 2022 funding package as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bailey K. Childers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bailey K. Childers
Director of Federal Government Affairs

BKC:BL:hf